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## Viewing cable 07PARIS4549, CHAVEZ DISAPPOINTS IN PARIS: IN MEETING WITH

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#07PARIS4549**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">07PARIS4549</a>	<a href="#">2007-11-21 18:52</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">SECRET</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Paris</a>

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OO RUEHWEB

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S E C R E T PARIS 004549

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/20/2017

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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ DISAPPOINTS IN PARIS: IN MEETING WITH SARKOZY, OFFERS NO "PROOF OF LIFE" FOR BETANCOURT REPORTS  
FARC PROMISES TO INCLUDE AMERICANS IN HOSTAGE RELIEF EFFORTS

Classified By: POL M/C Josiah Rosenblatt for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S/NOFORN) SUMMARY. Venezuelan President Chavez's November 20 discussions with French President Sarkozy focused "99 percent" on the FARC hostages. Chavez's unfilled promise to bring "proof of life" of Ingrid Betancourt disappointed the French, and left the GOF with lowered expectations for proof of life in the future. The French maintain their position that they will consider pushing the Colombians for any concessions at this time. France might re-evaluate the utility of this position if proof is provided. Chavez stated that FARC leader Manuel Marulanda promised that the three kidnapped Americans would be included in any release of hostages. Sarkozy took the opportunity to recommend to a "quiet, articulate" Chavez that he improve relations with the U.S. The presidents did not discuss Chavez's proposed constitutional reform. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S/NOFORN) On November 21, Political M/C met with Damien Loras, Americas Advisor at the French Presidency to get a read-out on Hugo Chavez's visit to Paris on November 20. Loras reported that Sarkozy and Chavez discussed hostage negotiations for "99 percent" of the hour-long meeting. While Chavez was not able to provide proof of life for Franco-Colombian hostage Ingrid Betancourt as he had hoped, the Venezuelan President told Sarkozy that he was certain to have such proof by the end of the year. Chavez also reported on conversations with and a letter from Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) commander Manuel Marulanda. Marulanda reportedly promised Chavez, in writing, that he would provide proof of life by year,s end. Chavez noted assurances from Marulanda that the three American hostages would be part of any humanitarian exchange. Colombian senator, Piedad Cordoba, who was also in Paris, told French officials that they would be receiving a similar letter from Marulanda in the next few days which the French agreed to share with the U.S.

¶3. (S/NOFORN) According to Loras, Chavez asked Sarkozy if the GOF would be willing to push Colombian President Uribe to allow negotiations between Marulanda and Chavez on Colombian soil. Sarkozy repeated that he was unwilling to consider pushing the Colombians on any issue until proof of life is provided. In the French estimation, said Loras, if the FARC are serious, it is unimportant who the FARC sends to negotiate; Marulanda is not the only possible negotiator. Loras told us that the French tried to make the point that the onus to act should currently rest with the FARC. Any failed attempt at this moment to get the Colombians (or others) to agree to some sort of concession would provide grounds for the FARC to annul their agreed commitment to provide proof of life. The French urged Chavez to keep Uribe informed and to be transparent.

¶4. (S/NOFORN) After Chavez's prior press statement that he thought he would have proof of life for his meetings, the French were disappointed when he arrived empty handed, and are now skeptical that proof will be provided by the end of the year. However, Loras noted that Marulanda's promise to provide proof of life by the end of the year is the first direct commitment from Marulanda himself. In Loras, estimation, if Marulanda cannot follow through, it would show him to be unreliable or unable to control his troops. Loras admitted that opinions within the GOF are split, but he personally feels the absence of "proof of life" is evidence Betancourt is no longer alive. Noting Sarkozy,s campaign promise to leave no stone unturned to secure Betancourt,s release and his continuing personal involvement, public expectations are high. He also noted wryly that all the attention has increased Betancourt's value to the FARC as a hostage: "she is the most valuable French hostage of all

time."

¶5. (S/NOFORN) Even without proof of life, the French continue to contend that Chavez has leverage over the FARC (Loras mentioned specifically the FARC crossing the border into Venezuela for food and medical care). Loras added that the French may, at some point, ask Chavez to exert pressure on the FARC in this regard. In the French view, Chavez is

aware that the FARC are playing a game with him. He does not see the FARC as a friend. Loras also noted his judgment that Chavez himself has no idea if Betancourt is alive or not, and described Chavez as not having good knowledge of the FARC.

¶6. (S/NOFORN) When POL M/C commented on Chavez's uncharacteristically quiet visit to Paris, with no public statements or media appearances, Loras admitted that prior to his arrival, the GOF had told Chavez through the Venezuelan Ambassador in Paris that he would have to tone down his rhetoric in France, or the French would cancel the trip. Loras described Chavez as quiet, articulate and thoughtful; he was not the uncouth loud-mouth he plays in public.

(Emboffs had previously been told by MFA contacts that Chavez had a scheduled press interview on the evening of November ¶20. This interview never occurred, which might be an indication that Chavez decided to restrict his appearances for fear he might not be welcome again in France. No doubt Chavez's lack of proof of life also played a role in his rather subdued visit to Paris.) Loras also clarified that Chavez was not late to the Sarkozy meeting. In fact, Sarkozy was late, forcing Chavez to wait in his vehicle for ten minutes. Chavez, for his part, never showed up to his meeting with French business leaders even though it was to be held in his hotel.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

STAPLETON

=====CABLE ENDS=====